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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TRILATERAL TALKS ON PKK/KONGRA-GEL

REF: A. ANKARA 82

[1](#)B. 04 ANKARA 6809

Classified By: DCM Robert S. Deutsch for reasons 1.4 (a), (b), (c), (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) U.S., Turkish, and IIG officials met Jan. 11 in Ankara for trilateral talks on PKK/Kongra-Gel. All sides agreed to our common resolve to defeat this organization, but the insurgency and Iraq's delicate transition all but rule out direct military action in the near term. At U.S. suggestion, Turkey and Iraq will hold expert talks (possibly with the U.S. as well) after the Iraqi election to determine the current state of both countries' laws and procedures to cooperate effectively in arresting and extraditing PKK/Kongra-Gel members. The Turks and Iraqis also agreed to establish a mechanism for sharing intelligence, though the Turks asked that for now the U.S. pass information to the Iraqis. The Turks presented both the Iraqis and us with a non-paper of eight "non-military" requests for action, though most require significant police action and are likely not feasible in the short term. They agreed to provide through other channels location information for PKK/Kongra-Gel media in northern Iraq as well as for PKK/Kongra-Gel's front office in Mosul.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary, cont.: In a bilateral U.S.-Turkish meeting the same day, the U.S. side pushed back against high Turkish expectations for action in northern Iraq given the insurgency. The Turks did not push us as hard as they could have and seemed determined to produce a positive outcome. They said they were encouraged by what they heard from the Iraqis but doubted Iraqi capability and Iraqi Kurdish intentions. Overall, the Turks are probably disappointed with the result of this meeting (as the senior military representative to the talks late told PolMilCouns), but hopefully will spin the admittedly limited results to mollify public opinion. End summary.

[1](#)3. (SBU) On Jan. 11, Turkish, IIG and U.S. officials met in Ankara for the first trilateral meeting on PKK/Kongra-Gel. The U.S. delegation was led by EUR DAS Amb. Laura Kennedy, accompanied by Embassy Baghdad Pol-Mil Counselor Amb. Ronald Neumann, Maj. Gen. Henry Stratman of MNF-I, and DCM. Special Coordinator for Iraq Amb. Osman Koruturk led the Turkish delegation; MFA Under Secretary Hamid Bayati led the IIG delegation. (Full list of participants in para. 22.) The three delegations all made opening statements, followed by a TGS presentation on PKK/Kongra-Gel's current activities, followed by a discussion. The Turks presented the Iraqis and us with a non-paper requesting eight "non-military" steps against the organization, and all three sides agreed to a positive press statement.

Turkey Not Seeking Immediate Military Action

[1](#)4. (C) The Turkish side emphasized that it was not using this meeting to demand direct military action against the PKK/Kongra-Gel at this time. In his opening statement, Koruturk was careful to thank the U.S. for what we have done as a Turkish ally against PKK/Kongra-Gel, and noted that the level and composition of the Iraqi and U.S. delegations was a demonstration of both countries' political commitment to this issue. He said that the U.S. and Turkey have worked together to isolate this terrorist organization. Defeating the PKK/Kongra-Gel, he added, would prove to the world that terrorism has no future as a route toward political aims.

[1](#)5. (C) Though PKK/Kongra-Gel "is disintegrating," Koruturk added, Turkey estimates there are still 3,000-3,500 militants in northern Iraq, and that 200-250 of them control the Makhmour refugee camp. PKK/Kongra-Gel is still planning and carrying out attacks in Turkey, and its two front parties in Iraq--the Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party and the Democratic Establishment Party (aka Democratic Construction Party)--are on the ballot for the Jan. 30 Iraqi elections (ref b). PKK/Kongra-Gel's continued presence in northern Iraq has taken on a "political dimension" within Turkey and resonates strongly with the public. Koruturk urged all sides to work together toward an "action-oriented plan" to correct the Turkish public misperception of a double standard in the GWOT.

We Agree: PKK/Kongra-Gel Is Our Common Enemy

16. (C) DAS Kennedy opened by emphasizing the common starting point for the discussion: PKK/Kongra-Gel is the common enemy of Iraq, Turkey, and the United States. The U.S. is Turkey's closest ally in the fight against this organization. We have designated it under its many names as a terrorist organization, provided more than \$10 million to Turkey in anti-terrorism assistance, shared intelligence, successfully lobbied the EU to designate the PKK and its successors as terrorist organizations, and worked with other countries to deny funding for these terrorists. The U.S. is committed to eliminating PKK/Kongra-Gel wherever it exists. Kennedy emphasized that all three countries' public diplomacy must present a united front. "Not to do so," she said, "provides aid and comfort to the enemy." Finally, she noted that in order to finally defeat PKK/Kongra-Gel in Iraq, we must continue to work together on the overarching goal of a stable, democratic Iraq.

17. (C) Amb. Neumann pointed out that the real key to victory will be the full return of sovereignty to a legitimate government in a stable Iraq. The current reality on the ground is that we are engaged in a major struggle against the insurgency. Jan. 30 elections will turn a page, but the struggle will continue and it will absorb our resources for some time. There are still things we can do, however; the constraints upon us do not lessen our determination. PKK/Kongra-Gel knows that we will arrest them if they appear; this is likely what keeps them confined to Qandil Mountain. Yet the Turkish press routinely reports--completely erroneously--that we meet with these terrorists. These reports feed the Turkish people's misapprehensions; we hope others will also deny these reports and thus diminish their impact.

18. (C) IIG MFA Under Secretary Bayati stated that PKK/Kongra-Gel "is a real and common threat," and noted Iraq's objective to fight terrorism around the world. Iraq seeks a better relationship with Turkey in all aspects, and thus the IIG believes this issue is of utmost importance. Bayati said that the IIG inherited terrorist groups in Iraq that Saddam had used to seek to destabilize his neighbors. Iraq's policy is not to allow any terrorist organization safe haven within its borders, but this can only be implemented once Iraq's forces are capable of enforcing this policy. Iraq wants to stop cross-border raids emanating from its territory, but it needs intelligence information from Turkey to do this. On Makhmour, Iraq will seek to discourage PKK/Kongra-Gel activity in and around the camp and encourage a voluntary repatriation process for its residents. In this regard, perhaps Turkey could extend its limited amnesty program. Bayati added that it will be important to engage KRG authorities in this effort; he said that KRG has committed to follow whatever steps the Iraqi government agrees to.

Turkish Military: Shutting Them Down Is Easy

19. (C) Following a short TGS brief on the current status of PKK/Kongra-Gel, the Turkish side responded to the U.S. and Iraqi remarks. Brig. Gen. Kenan Husnuoglu said that we should not be complacent that PKK/Kongra-Gel is weakening. The Turks believe that its recruits among Iraqis increased in 2004, as did its financial resources due to racketeering and extortion activities in northern Iraq. PKK/Kongra-Gel does not expect its two front parties to be successful in the Jan. 30 elections, he claimed; the organization rather looks at these parties "as an investment in the future." Maj. Gen. Mehmet Eroç of TGS J3 averred that steps such as closing PKK/Kongra-Gel front party offices and preventing them from running in elections could be easily accomplished.

Turks Seek Extraditions, Closure of TV and Radio Stations

10. (C) Koruturk rejected extending limited amnesty at this time to PKK/Kongra-Gel terrorists. Turkish citizens should be returned to Turkey for prosecution, third-country nationals should be sent home to face trial, and Iraqi PKK/Kongra-Gel members should "be isolated so they cannot threaten others," he said. The Makhmour residents do not need an amnesty program, he pointed out, they need protection from PKK/Kongra-Gel intimidation. Koruturk noted that PKK/Kongra-Gel is able to broadcast television and radio programs, and requested joint action to shut down these operations. (NOTE: The Turks are working through other channels to provide us location and other specific information on PKK/Kongra-Gel media in northern Iraq. END NOTE.) Koruturk added that Interpol has identified 17 PKK/Kongra-Gel leaders with Interpol "red warrants." Iraq therefore has a legal obligation to arrest and extradite (sic) these people. Bayati agreed with regard to those PKK/Kongra-Gel terrorists who are subjects of Interpol warrants, but the Iraqi Justice Ministry representative added

that for other suspects Turkey would need to present evidence of their crimes to the relevant Iraqi authorities in order for the Iraqis to make arrests. The same holds true for Turkish desires to close down offices of parties it claims are PKK/Kongra-Gel fronts: Turkey would need to present evidence. On this point, Koruturk responded that the Turkish side would present such evidence to the Iraqis before they leave Ankara.

Agreed Steps: Legal Talks, Intel Sharing

11. (C) Amb. Neumann recommended that Iraqi and Turkish legal experts meet to determine the answers to these questions in terms of this kind of bilateral cooperation; the U.S. can assist with legal or other technical issues. The Turkish and Iraqi sides agreed to this idea, and will hold such a meeting after the Iraqi elections. (NOTE: Turkish MFA told us Jan. 12 that they understand U.S. experts will also attend this meeting. END NOTE.) Koruturk noted that Iraq and Turkey signed a bilateral convention on judicial cooperation in 1985; its experts may wish to review this treaty to see if it is adequate to deal with these issues. Additionally, the Turkish and Iraqi sides agreed to establish an intelligence-sharing mechanism on PKK/Kongra-Gel. The Turks asked, however, that until they establish such a mechanism the U.S. continue to facilitate the sharing of intelligence with the Iraqis.

12. (S) DAS Kennedy welcomed the idea of a legal experts meeting (we had previewed this idea with the Iraqi delegation). She added that the U.S. is compiling evidence in order to designate PKK/Kongra-Gel's front parties in Iraq as terrorist organizations, that we continue to work with Turkey and third countries to publicize the PKK/Kongra-Gel threat and cut off funding, recruitment, training, and transit in and through these countries. We believe Turkish-Iraqi intelligence-sharing would be valuable, and reminded the Turks that we have in the past made certain offers for enhanced surveillance that the Turks may wish to reconsider. We also seek more information from the Turks and others on PKK/Kongra-Gel broadcasting and other activities in Europe and elsewhere. Finally, as an EU candidate now ready to begin accession negotiations, Turkey is in a renewed position of strength to bring PKK/Kongra-Gel activities in Europe to the EU's attention. We will work together with Turkey in these efforts.

ISF Capabilities

13. (C) Maj. Gen. Stratman noted that the ISF's ability to deal with PKK/Kongra-Gel is not necessarily a distant prospect. He described how the recent surge in the insurgency has prompted the plus-up of coalition forces in northern Iraq. Additionally, Iraqi National Guard and police are entering Mosul in strength to reestablish control for Jan. 30 elections. In taking on the insurgents in Najaf and Fallujah, we went in heavily with coalition forces assisted by ISF, took down the insurgency, and left ISF in place to maintain law and order. We will deploy the same model in Mosul. Overall, the ISF are made up of 25 battalions; in six months this will increase to 45. These battalions are similar to the Turkish Jandarma in terms of capability. In this scenario, the Iraqi (and MNF-I) ability to act in northern Iraq on actionable intelligence will be increasing in the near term. Providing security in and around Makhmour would be a suitable mission for ISF under the incoming Iraqi Transitional Government.

Bilateral Turkish-U.S. Meeting

14. (C) In a bilateral meeting later Jan. 11 between the U.S. and Turkish delegations, the Turks took a somewhat harsher line. While Koruturk said that "of course it is wrong" to say that the U.S. is doing nothing to deal with PKK/Kongra-Gel, he stated that this is the Turkish public perception. This perception also includes the belief that the U.S. is passing off the problem to the Iraqis. Noting that this issue comes up in every discussion of U.S.-Turkish relations, he urged us to work with the Iraqis and Turks to take the steps outlined in the Turkish non-paper. He added that in his view the Iraqi delegation showed solid resolve to cooperate on this issue. DAS Kennedy rejoined that the GOT must help in this regard; its officials must reach out to journalists and discount ridiculous stories that we are working with PKK/Kongra-Gel, for example. The GOT should seek to shape public opinion by extensive backgrounding; Koruturk agreed this is important.

15. (C) Amb. Neumann urged the Turks to proceed with technical legal discussions, and pointed out one possible pitfall the Turks should be aware of. Under new Iraqi law Iraqi authorities can only detain suspects if they have a legal case against them. Thus MNF-I keeps a number of

detainees--clearly people we do not want released yet not people against whom we can yet make a case in court--because the Iraqis could not hold them themselves. Thus the Turks need to explore in advance whether the Iraqis will be in a position to detain PKK/Kongra-Gel suspects, even if the are indeed the subject of an Interpol warrant. DAS Kennedy pointed out that in terms on intelligence sharing, the Turks will need to identify clearly to us what information we should share with the Iraqis and what Turkey would prefer we do not share. The Turks agreed.

¶16. (C) MFA DG for Security Affairs Hayati Guven emphasized that there are high expectations among Turkish officials and the Turkish public regarding these talks and the need for U.S. action in northern Iraq. He noted that the first thing Minister Gul asked about the trilateral talks was what concrete proposals resulted. Amb. Neumann responded firmly that Turkey must measure its expectations against the war we are currently fighting in Iraq. We have had to send five battalions to Mosul to deal with an insurgency that has left 200 dead bodies in the streets to intimidate the population. Insurgents have murdered both the Deputy National Police Commissioner and the Governor of Baghdad Province in the past week. We have had to increase our presence in Iraq from 130,000 to 160,000 troops. If we fail in Iraq Turkey will have a much bigger problem next door than it currently does. If Turkish expectations are unreasonable, we will get into a cycle where we cannot help each other.

¶17. (C) The U.S. side requested several items. First, noting our current activity in Mosul, Amb. Neumann asked that the Turks provide ASAP as much information as possible on PKK/Kongra-Gel terrorists who are active there. (Note: The Turks claimed they did not have significant information on their Mosul activities, but will endeavor to try. END NOTE.) Second, DAS Kennedy asked that Turkey share information on its discussions with the Europeans on PKK/Kongra-Gel activities so that we can coordinate our approaches. Kennedy also requested that Turkish counterterrorism officials keep the IMU/Islamic Jihad a priority focus as these individuals are targeting the U.S. in Central Asia. The Turks agreed to do so.

¶18. (C) The Turks closed by expressing serious concern about the credibility and willingness of the KRG to assist in taking down PKK/Kongra-Gel as well as concern that the ITG may still not be in a position to take effective steps in this area. Finally, they added that a U.S. failure in Iraq will be a failure for the West and thus also for Turkey. While Turkey believes the U.S. must win, "there is still no excuse for a double standard."

Comment

¶19. (C) As he did with trilateral discussions on trucker security, Koruturk ran this meeting professionally and cut off his own delegation members when they wandered into unrelated areas. He also took pains to thank the U.S. for what we have done to deal with PKK/Kongra-Gel. His comments suggest that--as we have noted for some time--the GOT is feeling public pressure that it has not delivered on its pledge to push us to take kinetic action against PKK/Kongra-Gel. (NOTE: Throughout the talks the senior Turkish military representative--TGS Deputy J3 Maj Gen Mehmet Erozu--took a notably tougher line with us on PKK/Kongra-Gel. TGS also uses the absence of U.S. action as a stick to beat up the moderate Islamist ruling AK Party, which it thoroughly dislikes. END NOTE.) At the same time, the Turks feel genuine frustration that the U.S. pledged to take action against PKK/Kongra-Gel in Iraq and has so far failed to do so. In that sense, the Turks will likely be disappointed with the limited outcome of this meeting. The trilateral meeting was a Turkish effort to manage widespread criticism on this subject, but the pressure for action in Iraq will certainly continue. How the Turks proceed next in the short run may very well depend on how the press and the Turkish people respond to the outcome of this meeting and others to come. End comment.

Turkish Non-Paper

¶20. (C) Koruturk presented both sides with a non-paper listing eight "non-military" steps the U.S. and Iraq could take against PKK/Kongra-Gel. We note that almost every item would require significant law enforcement action on the part of the already-stretched ISF.

BEGIN TEXT (note: internal paragraph numbering)

NON PAPER

¶1. PKK/KONGRA-GEL terrorist elements in Iraq who are Turkish citizens shall be repatriated to Turkey; first and foremost the members of the leadership.

12. It is crucial that these PKK/KONGRA-GEL members not be allowed to enter any third country, not to be granted asylum and be repatriated to Turkey. To that effect, the United States of America shall support the Turkish representations in the capitals of third countries.
13. PKK/KONGRA-GEL members who are Iraqi citizens shall be disarmed and barred from affiliation with any political institutions and/or political activity in Iraq.
14. PKK/KONGRA-GEL members who are citizens of a third country shall be expelled from Iraq.
15. PKK/KONGRA-GEL members should not be allowed to join the Iraqi public entities and state institutions.
16. All mass media activities of the terrorist organization, including radio and TV broadcastings shall be prevented.
17. Necessary precautions shall be taken to put an end to the safe haven that the PKK/KONGRA-GEL is benefiting in Iraq and the terrorist organization shall be denied any logistic and financial support.
18. The dissolution of the Makhmur Camp in Iraq shall be treated as a part of the process of elimination of PKK/KONGRA-GEL from Iraq. PKK/KONGRA-GEL members in the aforementioned Camp shall be treated as stipulated above in order to allow the rest of the residents to express their free will for return to Turkey.

Ankara, 11 January, 2005

END TEXT

Joint Press Statement

121. (U) BEGIN TEXT

JOINT PRESS RELEASE
(Ankara, 11 January 2005)

A tripartite meeting was held among delegations comprising high level representatives of the Republic of Turkey, the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq in order to discuss the essentials of cooperation towards the termination of the terrorist threat against Turkey originating from Northern Iraq, and elimination from the region of the terrorist elements causing this threat. Delegations included civilian and military authorities of the three countries attending the meeting.

Both Iraqi and Turkish delegations agreed to have future meetings and bilateral cooperation regarding the fight against terrorist groups including the PKK/KONGRA-GEL.

The United States welcomed this enhanced bilateral cooperation between Turkey and Iraq and underscored its own commitment to also work bilaterally with Turkey and third countries to combat the PKK/KONGRA-GEL around the world.

In this first tripartite meeting on cooperation aimed at realizing the aforementioned objective, the parties endorsed the need for effective international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, discussed the measures that are needed for the elimination of the terrorist organization PKK/KONGRA-GEL and its affiliates in northern Iraq, and agreed that the formulation and implementation of those measures be monitored through continuing tripartite meetings at appropriate levels.

END TEXT

List of Participants

122. (U) U.S. Delegation:

EUR DAS Amb. Laura Kennedy
Pol-Mil Counselor Amb. Ronald Neumann, Embassy Baghdad
Maj. Gen. Henry Stratman, MNF-I
DCM Robert Deutsch, Embassy Ankara
Brent Hartley, Acting Deputy Coordinator, S/CT
Doug Silliman, Deputy Director, EUR/SE
Tom Spang, Counterterrorism Analyst
Stephen Epstein, NEA/I
Lisa Heald, OSD
LTC Eric von Tersch, JCS J5
LTC Robert Hopkins, EUCOM J5
LTC Michael Groen, EUCOM Intelligence Planner
Jeremiah Howard, Senior Pol-Mil Officer, Embassy Baghdad
MAJ Ryanovic, MNF-I
MAJ Leibberger, MNF-I
COL Rick Ramirez, ODC Turkey
LTC Larry Allan Elza, ODC Turkey

CPT Jude Register, ODC Turkey
Charles O. Blaha, Deputy Political Counselor, Embassy Ankara
LTC Thomas Mooney, Liaison Officer to Turkish Special Forces
in northern Iraq
LTC Randy Smith, Asst. Army Attache, Embassy Ankara
David Burger, Pol-Mil Officer, Embassy Ankara
James Sopp, Political Officer, Embassy Ankara

Turkish Delegation:

Amb. Osman Koruturk, GOT Special Representative for Iraq
Amb. Selahaddin Alpar, MFA Director General for U.S. and the
Americas
Amb. Hayati Guven, MFA Director General for Security Affairs
Maj. Gen. Mehmet Eroz, TGS/J3
Brig. Gen. Kenan Husnuoglu, TGS/J2
Tunc Ugdul, MFA Deputy Director General for Multilateral
Affairs
Suna Ilicak, MFA Deputy Director General for the Americas
Selim Akyildiz, General Directorate of Security Head of
Department
Cemal Uzgoren, Turkish National Intelligence Organization
Huseyin Avni Botsali, MFA Head of Iraq Department

Iraqi Delegation:

Hamid Bayati, MFA Under Secretary
Amb. Taha Sukur Mahmoud, MFA
Lt. Gen. Mohammed Naksibendi, Ministry of Defense
Sabah Jassim Mohammed, MFA
Vedat El Kaysi, Ministry of Justice
Zine Jafer Hassan, MFA
Hisham el Shebib, Prime Ministry
Iraqi Ambassador to Turkey Sabah Omran
DCM Abdullah Munthir, Iraqi Embassy in Ankara
Omer Merani, KDP Representative in Ankara
KRG Representative
123. (U) This cable was cleared by DAS Kennedy, Amb. Neumann,
and Maj. Gen. Stratman.
124. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
EDELMAN